

## The Third Order of St. Francis

PAPAL ENCYCLICAL ON ITS SEVENTH CENTENARY.

*Translation from the "Irish Catholic."*

**B**ENEDICT XV. POPE, Venerable Brothers, Health and Apostolic Benediction. We regard as most opportune the approaching feast of the Seventh Centenary of the Third Order of Penance. Many motives prompt Us to add to them a new lustre in inviting to them, in virtue of Our Apostolic authority, the Catholic world, but before all is the hope of the incontestable advantages which the Christian people will draw therefrom.

In the next place there is the personal remembrance which they evoke for Us. We love to recall that in 1882, when the centenary of his birth spread amongst the mass of the Faithful the fervent cultus of Francis of Assisi, We wished to range Ourselves amongst the disciples of that great Patriarch, and received regularly the habit of the Tertiaries in the celebrated Church of Ara Coeli, served by the Friars Minors. Today, placed by Providence on the chair of the Prince of the Apostles, We are particularly happy to seize this occasion to testify Our devotion to St. Francis in exhorting the Catholics of the entire world to affiliate themselves with eagerness or to remain faithfully attached to this Franciscan institution, which today responds marvelously to the needs of society.

That which matters now is to replace before all eyes the true moral physiognomy of St. Francis. The St. Francis of Assisi whom certain moderns present to us, and who springs from the imagination of the Modernists, this man, guarded in his obedience to the Apostolic See, a specimen of a vague and vain religiosity, is assuredly neither Francis of Assisi nor a saint.

The striking and immortal services rendered by Francis to the Christian cause, which have shown in him the defender whom God in such troubled times reserved for the Church, found, as it were, their coronation in the Third Order. Is there anything which proves more clearly the greatness and violence of the burning desire which con-

sumed his soul to spread throughout the whole earth the glory of Jesus Christ?

Profoundly saddened by the misfortunes which the Church was then passing through, Francis conceived the incredible design of renewing everything conformably to the principles of the Christian law. After having founded a double religious family, one of Brothers, the other of Sisters, who pledged themselves by solemn vows to imitate the humility of the Cross, Francis, in the impossibility of opening the cloister to all whom the desire of being formed in his school drew to him, resolved to procure, even for souls living in the whirlpool of the world, the means to tend to Christian perfection. He founded, then, an Order properly called Tertiaries, differing from the two other Orders in that it would not bear the bond of the religious vows, but would be characterized by the same simplicity of life and the same spirit of penance. Thus the project which no founder of a regular Order had yet imagined, to cause the religious life to be practised by all, Francis first conceived the idea of and the grace of God gave him to realize it with the greatest success. We have no other proof of it than this beautiful homage of Thomas de Celano: "Marvelous workman, whose example, direction, and teachings have this admirable result, to renew in both sexes the Church of Christ and to lead to triumph a triple phalanx of souls preoccupied with their salvation." (1 Cel. xv. 40).

We shall confine Ourselves to this testimony of so authoritative a contemporary; of itself it suffices amply to show to what a depth and to what an extent this initiative of Francis of Assisi shook the popular masses, what notable and salutary reparations it worked therein.

#### A WISE LAW GIVER.

Uncontested founder of the Third Order, as he was of the two first, Francis was for it, further, without doubt, the most wise legislator. We know that for this work he had the precious aid of Cardinal Ugolino, who later, under the name of Gregory IX, was to make illustrious this Apostolic See, and who, after having whilst he lived, maintained the closest relations with the Patriarch of Assisi, elevated later on his tomb a magnificent and sump-

tuous basilica. As to the rule of the Tertiaries, no one is ignorant that it was regularly approved by Our predecessor, Nicholas IV.

But We shall not, Venerable Brothers, delay Ourselves too long on these questions; Our object is here, before all, to bring to light the character, and, as one says, the particular spirit of the Third Order, for the Church expects from it special advantages for the Christian people in this age, as hostile to virtue and to faith as was the epoch of Francis of Assisi. With his profound sense of situations and times Our predecessor, Leo XIII., of happy memory, desirous to adapt better the regulation of life of the Tertiaries to the social level of each of the Faithful, brought, by the Constitution "*Misericors Dei Filius*" (1883) to their statutes or rule most wise modifications which should put them in accord with the actual state of society; he modified it in some secondary points responding but imperfectly to our customs of today.

"Let none believe," said he, "that these changes take away anything whatsoever from the essential principles of that Order. We wish absolutely that they remain in their integrity, and secure from any breach." The rule of the Third Order has then undergone only retouchings of detail; its range and spirit have been respected, which remain what their holy founder willed them. Now it is Our conviction that the spirit of the Third Order, altogether impregnated with the wisdom of the Gospel, would be a powerful element for the making healthy of private and public morals if it were spread anew as in the times in which by his word and example Francis preached everywhere the Kingdom of God.

#### THE THIRD ORDER'S SPIRIT.

What Francis wished to shine out, above all, in his Tertiaries, and which ought to be as their characteristic mark, is fraternal charity, most watchful guardian of peace and concord. Knowing that charity is the special commandment brought by Jesus Christ and the synthesis of the whole Christian law, St. Francis was careful to make of it the spiritual rule of his children; and he attained this result, that the Third Order rendered naturally the greatest service to the entire human family.

Further, Francis was powerless to contain in the recesses of his heart the seraphic love which consumed him for God and his brothers; he was compelled to permit it to overflow on all the souls which he could reach. Thus it was that he set himself to reform the individual and family life of his disciples in forming them to the practise of the Christian virtues with such ardor as would make one believe that it was all his program. But he did not dream that he ought to limit himself to this; individual conversion was but an instrument of which he availed himself to reawaken in the bosom of society love of Christian wisdom, and to gain all men for Christ.

The preoccupation which had moved Francis of Assisi to make of the members of the Third Order messengers and apostles of peace in the midst of the bitter discords and civil wars of his time was ours in the days wherein the conflagration of a horrible war was kindled in almost the entire world; it has not ceased to be so at a moment in which, here and there, the smoking hearth of this ill-extinguished conflagration still shoots out flames.

To this scourge has been added the interior crisis which the nations are going through, first of the forgetfulness and prolonged disdain of Christian principles. We wish to say that this fight for the sharing of goods which sets in conflict the different classes of society is so relentless that it threatens already to lead to a universal catastrophe.

In this so vast field, wherein, as representative of the pacific King, We have lavished Our especially attentive cares, We make an appeal for the zealous help of all those who claim for themselves Christian peace, but especially for the collaboration of the Tertiaries. They will exert a marvelous influence in restoring concord in spirit the day wherein their number and their efforts will be developed. It is, then, desirable that in every city, town, and even in each village, the Third Order count henceforth a sufficient group of members, not of inactive adherents satisfied with the mere title of Tertiaries, but, instead, of those who spend themselves with zeal for their own salvation and the salvation of their brothers. Why even should not the various Catholic associations which multiply everywhere, associations of youth, of workmen, of women, not affiliate themselves to the Third Order to

continue to work for the glory of Jesus Christ and the triumph of the Church with the same zeal that Francis had for peace and charity?

THE ORDER PROMOTES MORALITY.

The peace for which humanity cries out is not that which the laborious treaty-making of human prudence can decree, but that which Christ brought by this message: "My peace I bring you; I do not give it as the world gives it." (John xiv: 27). The accords between State and State or between class and class which men have been able to shadow forth will not be durable, and will not have the force of true peace except on condition that they are founded on the pacification of hearts; and that itself is only possible if duty has bridled the passions whence all conflicts spring. "Whence comes," asks the Apostle James, "wars and quarrels amongst you? Is it not from your passions, which combat in your members?" (James iv.: 1.) Now to regulate wisely all the movements inherent to nature in such a way as to make man the master, not the slave, of his passions, submissive himself, and docile to the Divine will, the hierarchy, which is at the base of universal peace, that belongs to Christ, and its action manifests a marvelous efficacy in the family of Franciscan Tertiaries.

This Order, having for its object, as We have said, to form its members in Christian perfection, even whilst they may be plunged in the embarrassments of the age, so true is it that no state of life is incompatible with sanctity, it happens, as it were, necessarily, where the Tertiaries in numbers observe faithfully their rule, that they are for all about them a source of encouragement in fulfilling their duties, and even to tending towards a perfection of life superior to the exigencies of the common law. The testimony rendered by the Divine Master to those who attached themselves closely to Him: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John xvii :16) may justly be applied to the sons of Francis who, if they observe the Evangelical counsels of mind and heart as far as possible in the world, may lawfully put to their account the words of the Apostle: "As for us, we have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit which comes from God" (1 Cor., 11:12).

They will seek, then—completely strangers themselves to the spirit of the world—to introduce the Spirit of Jesus Christ in the current of social life on every side to which they have access.

Now there are two passions today dominant in the profound lawlessness of morals—an unlimited desire of riches and an insatiable thirst for pleasures. It is this which marks with a shameful stigma our epoch; whilst it goes ceaselessly from progress to progress in the order of all which touches the well-being and convenience of life, it seems that in the superior order of honesty and of moral rectitude a lamentable retrogression leads it back to the ignominies of ancient paganism. In that measure, in truth, wherein men lose sight of eternal goods which Heaven reserved for them, they permit themselves to be more taken in by the deceitful mirage of the ephemeral goods here below, and once their souls are turned down towards the earth, an easy descent leads them insensibly to relax themselves in virtue, to experience repugnance for spiritual things, and to relish nothing outside the seductions of pleasure. Hence the general situation which we note: with some the desire to acquire riches or to increase their patrimony knows no bounds; others no longer know, as formerly, how to bear the trials which are the usual result of want or poverty; and at the very hour in which the rivalries we have pointed out set by the ears the rich and the proletariat a great number seem to wish to further excite the hatred of the poor by an unbridled luxury which accompanies the most revolting corruption.

#### MODESTY IN DRESS.

From this point of view one cannot sufficiently deplore the blindness of so many women of every age and condition; made foolish by desire to please, they do not see to what a degree the indecency of their clothing shocks every honest man, and offends God. Most of them would formerly have blushed for those toilettes as for a grave fault against Christian modesty; now it does not suffice for them to exhibit them on the public thoroughfares; they do not fear to cross the threshold of the churches, to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and even to bear the seducing food of shameful passions to the Eucharistic Table where

one receives the heavenly Author of purity. And We speak not of those exotic and barbarous dances recently imported into fashionable circles, one more shocking than the other; one cannot imagine anything more suitable for banishing all that remains of modesty.

In considering attentively this state of things, the Tertiaries will understand what it is that our epoch expects from the disciples of St. Francis. If they bring their gaze back to the life of their Father, they will see what perfect and living resemblance to Jesus Christ, above all in His flight from satisfactions and his love of trials in this life, had he whom they call the *Poverello*, and who had received in his flesh the stigmata of the Crucified. It is for them to show that they remain worthy of him by embracing poverty, at least in spirit, in renouncing themselves, and in bearing each one his cross.

In what concerns specially the Tertiary Sisters, We ask of them by their dress and manner of wearing it, to be models of holy modesty for other ladies and young girls; that they be thoroughly convinced that the best way for them to be of use to the Church and to Society is to labor for the improvement of morals.

Moreover, after having created divers charitable works for the solace of the indigent in their wants of every kind, the members of this Order would wish, further, We are sure, to cause those of their brothers who are deprived of goods more precious than those of earth, to benefit by their charity.

Here comes back to Us the memory of the counsel of the Apostle Peter, asking Christians to be, by the holiness of their lives, models for the Gentiles, and this in order that, "remarking your good works, they glorify God in the day of His visitation" (Peter II.: 12). Like them, the Franciscan Tertiaries ought, by the integrity of their faith, the holiness of their lives, and the ardor of their zeal, spread abroad the good words of Christ, to warn those of their brethren who have gone out from the road, and to press them to re-enter upon it. Behold that which the Church asks, that which she expects from them.

As to Us, We cherish the hope that the coming celebration will mark for the Third Order a new development,



and We doubt not that you yourselves, Venerable Brothers, as well as the other pastors of souls, will make great efforts to cause to flourish again the groups of Tertiaries where they vegetate, and to create others everywhere possible, and to render all flourishing, as much by the observation of the rule as by the number of their members.

In truth what is in hand definitely is, by imitation of Francis of Assisi to open to the greatest possible number of souls the way which will lead them back to Christ; it is in this return that resides the firmest hope of salvation for society. The word of St. Paul, "Be my imitators, as I myself am of Christ" (i Cor. xi. ; i), we can with good right put upon the lips of Francis, who, in imitating the Apostle, has become the most faithful image and copy of Jesus Christ.

Thus, in order that these celebrations bear still more fruit, upon the instances of the Ministers-General of the three Franciscan families of the First Order, We accord the following favors drawn from the treasury of the Holy Church:

I. In all churches wherein the Third Order is canonically erected, and wherein will be celebrated by a Triduum the solemnities of the Centenary in the year to run from April 16, next: the Tertiaries each day of the Triduum, the other Faithful once only, may gain a plenary indulgence from their sins. All the Faithful who, with contrite hearts, will visit the Blessed Sacrament in one of these churches may gain at each visit (*toties quoties*) an indulgence of seven years.

II. All the altars of these churches will be deemed for those three days privileged altars; during the course of the Triduum every priest may celebrate there the Mass of St. Francis, following the rite of the Mass "*pro re gravi et simul publice de causa*" according to the general rubrics of the Roman Missal inserted in the last Vatican edition.

III. All priests who serve these churches may, during these same days, bless beads, medals, and other objects of piety, enrich them with Apostolic indulgences, and apply to beads the Crozier and Bridgettine indulgences.

As pledge of Divine favors, and in testimony of Our paternal benevolence, We accord with all Our heart, to



you, Venerable Brothers, and to all the members of the Third Order, the Apostolic Benediction.

Given at Rome, near St. Peter's, the Feast of the Epiphany of the year 1921, in the seventh year of Our Pontificate.

BENEDICT XV., POPE.

## Religious Statistics in Ireland

P. J. GANNON, S. J.

*Adapted from the "Irish Ecclesiastical Record"*

AT the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Belfast the Rev. J. S. Rutherford said that, taking Ireland as a whole, the Catholic Church had not been making the headway it was supposed to be making. The Rev. J. S. Rutherford is well-informed; and I do not think it can do any harm if Catholics themselves, especially the clergy, realize how accurate is his statement. He was right alike in asserting that the Catholic Church was supposed to be making headway and in denying the truth of the supposition. People in general, who judge by outward manifestations, and who see how churches, monasteries, convents, hospitals, and schools have arisen all over the land, are naturally led to conclude that the Church which came out of its Catacombs in 1829 has indeed made headway. And if stones constitute a Church there is no need to revise this opinion.

But the Greeks had a saying, "the city is the citizens." On analogy we may say that "the Church is the congregation," the living stones, for which granite, or even marble, is a poor substitute. And if we examine the facts of the case in the light of this principle, we shall find that, so far from having made headway, the Catholic Church in Ireland presents quite a startling picture of decline. Briefly stated, the Catholic population has not only dwindled absolutely by more than 50 per cent in less than a century, but has diminished relatively to all other creeds, so that the century which has elapsed since Emanc-

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ipation has affected what the Penal Laws could not accomplish, the progressive de-Catholicization of Ireland. This will astonish many and need conclusive proofs; but the proofs are not wanting, and they are, alas! only too conclusive.

It will help to the fuller understanding of the problem to begin with the general statistics of the British Isles since the Union, as they are given in the official records:

Year	Ireland	Scotland	England and Wales
1801 .....	.....	1,608,420	8,892,536
1805 .....	5,395,456	.....	.....
1811 .....	.....	1,805,864	10,164,256
1814 .....	5,937,856	.....	.....
1821 .....	6,801,825	2,091,521	12,000,236
1831 .....	7,767,401	2,364,386	13,896,797
1834 .....	7,954,100	.....	.....
1841 .....	8,196,597	2,620,184	15,914,148
1846 .....	8,287,848	.....	.....
1851 .....	6,574,278	2,888,742	17,927,609
1861 .....	5,798,967	3,062,294	20,066,224
1871 .....	5,412,377	3,360,018	22,712,266
1881 .....	5,174,836	3,735,573	25,974,439
1891 .....	4,704,750	4,025,647	29,002,525
1901 .....	4,458,775	4,472,103	32,527,843
1911 .....	4,390,219	4,760,904	36,070,492
1918 .....	4,380,000	.....	.....

The more one considers these figures the more amazing do they grow. The Irish people are prolific and singularly free from what is known as Malthusianism. Yet on its own soil, after a brief period of growth due to the Napoleonic wars and the protective tariffs (removed in the forties by Sir R. Peel), it has been steadily and rapidly disappearing. And a mere glance at the above table would suggest to any unbiased student that some extraordinary blood-transfusion has been going on from the smaller to the larger island. If British critics found the same phenomenon in the case of a subject people elsewhere, they would be the first to point out the obvious moral of the tale, and would brush aside contemptuously the excuses of the predatory nation. But we are not here concerned with the larger, political aspect of the situation.

## ALL RELIGIOUS BODIES LESS

Religious statistics are found in the census records only since 1861. This is to be regretted, but we have still enough data to go upon in the following conspectus:

Year	Catholics	Per cent.	Episcopalian Pro- testants	Per cent.	Presbyterians	Per cent.	Methodists	Per cent.	Others	Per cent.
1861..	4,505,265	77.69	693,357	11.96	539,291	9.02	45,399	0.79	81,655	0.54
1871..	4,150,867	76.69	667,968	12.34	497,648	9.20	43,441	0.80	52,428	0.87
1881..	3,960,891	76.54	639,574	12.36	470,734	9.10	48,839	0.94	54,798	1.06
1891..	3,547,307	75.4	600,103	12.75	444,494	9.46	55,500	1.18	56,866	1.21
1901..	3,308,661	74.21	581,089	13.03	442,276	9.94	62,006	1.39	63,743	1.43
1911..	3,242,670	73.86	576,611	13.13	440,525	10.04	62,382	1.42	68,031	1.55

From these figures the following facts emerge: All the greater religious bodies have diminished absolutely. Only the small Methodist group and the nondescripts can show a positive increase. But when we look at the percentage columns we find that *all* non-Catholic communities have grown relatively and only the Church of the majority decreased both absolutely and relatively—a very singular result, for, as we shall see later, it is the tendency of majorities to absorb minorities. The Catholics numbered 4,505,265 in 1861, and constituted 77.69 per cent of the population; in 1911 they numbered 3,243,670, and were only 73.86 per cent of the nation, a fall of nearly 4 per cent.

If now we endeavor to push our inquiry backward to 1846, and assume merely the same rate of decline we would get about 78½ per cent or 79 per cent in 1846. But in all probability it was much higher. For the enormous losses in the years 1847-1851 fell almost exclusively on the Catholic community. The worst ravages of the famine were confined to Munster, Connaught, and the Highlands of Donegal. It was felt elsewhere, of course, but not so acutely, and least of all among the more prosperous Protestant minority. We may, therefore, without fear of exaggeration, assume that over 80 per cent, possibly 85 per cent of the people, were Catholic in 1846. Taking 82 per cent as a safe estimate, and 8¼ millions as the population (it was, in fact, a little more), we get a Catholic population

of 6,965,000. We can conclude, therefore, that in 1846 there were certainly  $6\frac{1}{2}$  million Catholics in Ireland, and very probably 7 millions. In 1911 there were only 3,243,670; today there are fewer still, as the estimated total for 1918 is 10,000 less than in 1911. Now, to speak of a community as making headway while it has been losing over 50 per cent absolutely, and some 8 per cent or 9 per cent relatively, does indeed seem an abuse of terms. . . .

Moreover, we learn that in the two almost exclusively Catholic provinces of Connaught and Munster, the non-Catholic minorities show a tendency to disappear. In view of the numerous testimonies given of late by those bodies themselves to the religious tolerance of the majority we may rule out bigotry or boycott as a cause of their decline. They are not persecuted for their beliefs, on their own admission. Hence the reasons are to be sought in the smallness of their scattered communities, which renders Church organization difficult, and in the results of inter-marriage, which everywhere tell in favor of the majority. In Leinster they are stronger and better organized and, as a consequence, hold their own. Only the Episcopalian Protestants show a slight relative loss (12.4 per cent in 1861, 12.06 per cent in 1911). The rest show an appreciable gain, and the net result is a relative loss for the Catholic body as against all non-Catholics combined (85.9 per cent in 1861, 85.2 per cent in 1911).

In the province of Ulster, on the other hand, only the Catholic body is losing on the relative statistics, and that so markedly, that what is gained in Connaught and Munster is more than counterbalanced by the loss in the North. In Ulster, therefore, we must seek the explanation of the startling phenomenon of the gradual de-Catholicization of Ireland taken as a whole. . .

We may add a list showing the percentages for all Ireland of Catholics and non-Catholics in rural districts, on the one hand, and towns over 1,500, on the other, for three decades:

Denominations	Towns			Rural Districts		
	1891	1901	1911	1891	1901	1911
Catholics .....	64.8	62.6	62.2	70.4	70.7	80.1
Episc. Protestants...	19.0	19.1	19.0	10.4	10.1	10.0

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Presbyterians .....	11.7	13.0	13.4	8.6	8.5	8.3
Methodists .....	2.3	2.7	2.7	0.7	0.8	0.7
Others .....	2.2	2.6	2.7	0.9	0.9	0.9

An examination of the figures for Ulster leads to the following conclusions. Every single county shows an unbroken, absolute decline of the general population, Tyrone and Down heading the list with a loss of over 95,000 each. We may remark, in passing, that this should dispose of the myth of Ulster prosperity, unless empty plains and hillsides be prosperity. It is true that the increase in Belfast would modify this result in the case of Antrim (considerably) and Down (slightly). But Belfast gets special treatment in the census records, which is only one of the countless indications going to prove the purpose of our rulers to elevate it into the capital of the country, and make it the center of their modern Pale, now that the Dublin Pale has gone over to the "mere Irish." It is a desperate expedient, foredoomed to failure, but the more clearly it is realized the more easily and expeditiously will it be defeated. Meantime we are justified in treating it apart, and, if we do so, we find that every Ulster county is emptying as rapidly as Munster or Connaught.

### GAINS AND LOSSES

But when we try to trace the ebb and flow of the religious struggle in the province we find that on the relative statistics Catholics gain in Donegal (75.1 per cent in 1861, 78.93 per cent in 1911), Cavan (80.5 per cent in 1861, 81.46 per cent in 1911), Monaghan (73.4 per cent in 1861, 74.68 per cent in 1911), and Derry City (55.21 per cent in 1901, 56.21 per cent in 1911), but lose elsewhere. This loss is greatest in Belfast (33.9 per cent in 1861, 24.10 per cent in 1911), Co. Antrim (24.8 per cent in 1861, 20.5 per cent in 1911), and Co. Armagh (48.8 per cent in 1861, 45.33 per cent in 1911). It is less marked in Down (32.46 per cent in 1861, 31.56 per cent in 1911); while in the land debatable of Fermanagh (56.5 per cent in 1861, 56.18 per cent in 1911) and Tyrone (56.5 per cent in 1861, 56.39 per cent in 1911) it is almost negligible.

If now we compare the little list giving the percentages for town and country and remember that, while Catholics are increasing their percentage on the land, they are losing in the towns, we shall be justified in seeking among the

North-eastern urban centers the secret of Catholic decrease. It is precisely in Antrim, North Down, and North Armagh that the growing linen towns Ballymena, Antrim, Lisburn, Lurgan, Portadown are situated, and, though we have not separate tables for them, we know that the same spirit rules as in Belfast. Hence we can fairly conclude that even east of the Bann and north of the Mourne Mountains the Catholics are true to Parnell's advice, and are "keeping their grip upon the land," while Protestants are waging a very bitter war to prevent them from invading the cities and the towns. If in this war they observed the rules of the game one would respect them more; but periodic outbursts of murder, arson, and forcible expulsion carried out under the guns of a protecting army of occupation, do not inspire respect. Further, they must prove ultimately futile; they are like concrete barriers against a sapping sea. Incidentally the necessity for them disproves the favorite explanation of "Ulsterites," that it is the inferior qualities of the "Papists" or "Fenians" which keep them out of the business towns; for obviously there would be no need for pogroms against a community that could not maintain itself in the field of industrial endeavor.

#### APOSTASY AND PERVERSION

We have concluded now our survey of the statistics and come at the facts. It remains to investigate the causes of the real decline, both absolute and relative, amid apparent progress. Apostasy, no doubt, plays a part, but so small as to be negligible. Indifferentism and anti-clericalism exist in Ireland as elsewhere, though very much less than anywhere else. But neither the most indifferent nor most anti-clerical call themselves Protestants, and they almost invariably die reconciled to the Church. Servant girls in certain Protestant homes are sometimes inveigled into meeting-houses and alienated from the practise of their religion for a time. Yet they, too, find their way back, as a rule. Souperism makes a few dubious perverses here and there. But the general attitude even of the poorest, towards this style of propaganda is well known. Mr. George Moore tells an inimitable story of his own "conversion." He informed a well-known Dublin physician

that he had determined to become a Protestant and had interviewed a prominent Church of Ireland divine. "Well," said the physician (himself a member of this Church) with a smile, "did he give you an order for blankets and coal?" It gives us the measure of an enlightened man's belief in the sincerity of such "conversions." Equally instructive and amusing is the reply of an old woman who came to a souper and said she wanted to become a Protestant. The agent of souperism to test her *bona fides*, asked her why she wished to change her religion. "Because I hear you give blankets and a leg of mutton to all who join you." "And would you sell your soul for a pair of blankets?" he urged. "No, sir," came the reply, "not without the leg of mutton."

More insidious are the activities of the baby-snatchers, and it is possible that their success has been underrated. There are always drunken and demoralized parents who will sell their children to the Bird-Nesters. Still more numerous probably are the fallen girls, who fly from home to escape shame and are only too glad to find refuge in Protestant institutions, and to leave their illicit offspring in the hands of those who sheltered them. These are then taken away and educated in bitter hatred of the religion of their parents. The children so lost to the Church only too often become themselves zealous agents in the fight against Catholicism. Yet, when all is said and done, this source of loss is but a small one, though every effort should be made to put an end to it.

#### EMIGRATION

The emigration of the youth of Ireland is the main cause of Catholic decline. Just when they should be marrying and settling down at home they are forced to fly abroad, leaving their country the poorer for the money spent upon them, and the feebler for the loss of their labor and their offspring. The peculiar economic conditions of Ireland explain how this factor tells against the Catholic community more than others. It lives chiefly on the land, and has few industries to absorb the superfluous children of the farms. Hence they must depart, or remain crowded into one home where the heir to the farm cannot marry on account of encumbrances. Further, the better positions



in such languishing industries as survive are very largely even outside the Black North, reserved to the children of the Ascendancy. Anyone who has ever interested himself in getting positions for Catholic youths is well aware of the subtle but powerful influence of Freemasonry or plain bigotry. It is idle to close our eyes to the fact. Most of the larger industries and businesses in Dublin, Cork, and Limerick will be found to be, in their ownership and management, mainly non-Catholic. Thus, out of about 260 of the greater establishments in the center of Dublin only about fifty could be called Catholic, and some seventy per cent of the Employers' Union in Cork are Protestants. Many of this class in both cities are estimable gentlemen, quite free from petty bigotry. But there are always strong Masons or bigots in key positions to give a "leg-up" to those whom they style "their own." There is hardly any religious test for carters or hall porters—service in the British army is the chief recommendation in their case—but there is in practise a religious test, deftly applied of course, where managements or directorates are concerned. The result is that ambitious young Catholics prefer to emigrate to other lands, where there is a *carrière* somewhat more *ouverte aux talents*. That the Irish business community suffers from such an unbusinesslike principle of selection needs no elaboration. A more liberal policy would help to lift the industries of the country to a far higher plane and ultimately benefit even the Masons and the non-Catholics themselves. But they still see the question through smoked glasses, and we must accept the fact till they lay them aside.

#### LOWER MARRIAGE-RATE

The fourth fact telling against Catholics is that the marriage-rate is uniformly lower among them than among others. Adversaries might suggest that the ideal of celibacy is the cause of this. But no one who understands the Church's attitude on this point will be misled. She certainly invites her children who feel called to the higher life of religion or the priesthood to forego matrimony. But against this she encourages early marriage among those who remain in the world, and in marriage insists with uncompromising rigor that there shall be no truck or traffic

with artificial limitation. Hence in point of fact, where some external factor does not intervene, the most Catholic peoples are among the most prolific in the world. The factor operating against this result in Ireland is again the economic factor. The Catholic population enjoys on the average a lower standard of well-being. For reasons rooted in history they constitute very largely an under-paid proletariat unable to marry in youth and unwilling to marry when youth is past. In the old days before the Famine early, improvident marriages were the rule. But the Famine has been the most disastrous event in Irish history since the Battle of Kinsale, and has made a very deep impression on the psychology of the race. The young seek some prospect of comfort before they will marry and bring children into the world to starve or become hod-carriers for Anglo-Saxondom in Glasgow, Liverpool, or New York. The Protestants, by their monopoly of better-paid posts, are more easily able to marry in youth, and this gives them a very obvious advantage in a struggle where the cradle is the deciding factor. Nor has the relative prosperity of the last ten or fifteen years altered matters much in this respect. It has been a peculiar prosperity, confined largely on the land to the large graziers. This has led to the eleven months' system and the growth of *latifundia*, where bullocks range knee-deep in grass, but the voices of children die away. The graziers place their money in anglicized banks, which send the money to the ends of the earth to develop other lands. Hence emigration has not ceased in recent years. It has lessened somewhat, but in proportion to the diminished population it was, up till the Great War at least, higher far than is healthy. It seems fairly certain that nothing but a radical change in the economic and industrial outlook can close the open wound through which the life-blood of Ireland, and very particularly of Catholic Celtic Ireland, is ebbing away.

We are often offered the consolation that what we have lost other lands have gained, that it is our special mission to be blown round the world as a sort of Christian pollen to fertilize with the Faith the paganism of the English speaking world. I have no doubt that out of the evil we have suffered God has worked good. But I think that even from the point of view underlying this contention we

have reached the danger-point. The churches founded by the Irish abroad are still largely dependent on the mother-country for priests, nuns, and religious of all kinds. The demand for them is insistent and growing. But a dwindling Catholic population of three and a-quarter millions cannot, on the law of averages, produce a constant, much less an increasing, supply of vocations. We can best serve the interests of these churches, in the long run, by saving the home of the race from the fatal hæmorrhage which has been going on. When the source of a stream is drying up the channel will soon be empty.

#### THE CHURCH'S GAINS ABROAD

There is another way of looking at the religious aspect of this question. The Catholic Church in England owes its freedom to the fight of Ireland for Emancipation. Further, it is not too much to say that three-quarters of its adherents owe their Faith to Irish ancestry. The absolute increase of this Church looks considerable at first sight, but if we remember the enormous growth of British population it may be doubted whether on relative statistics it is even holding its own. And if we consider the two islands together and look back upon our statistics, we arrive at the following result. The Catholic community in both taken together numbered about one-fourth of the total population in 1800. This percentage remained till 1846. Then came the great dispersion of the Irish Celts, and today the Catholics number between five and a-quarter and five and a-half millions out of a total of about forty-seven millions, or a little over one-ninth. Of course, the Church in America, Australasia, and Canada has gained, though perhaps not more than in proportion with non-Catholic elements; and at least in the British Isles it is absurd to speak of making headway while we have been dropping from one-fourth to one-ninth of the population.

It would be well if all the molders of Catholic thought in Ireland and Great Britain gave serious consideration to these facts. A local and partial gain is a small thing to set off against a continuous wasting of the whole body. And a contemptuous tolerance of a vanishing creed is not much to be thankful for on the one side, or to boast about on the other. The British people have a gracious way of

breaking their enemies to pieces and then of patronizing them when the *coup de grâce* has been given. They have an instinctive fear of tall or growing poppies, but will show no unnecessary animus against headless ones.

Nor do we see why the responsible leaders of non-Catholic creeds in Ireland should feel satisfaction with the condition of affairs revealed above. Certainly neither the Church of Ireland nor the Presbyterian body has much reason to rejoice at a system that, in effect, gives them the preference Polyphemus accorded to Ulysses of being devoured last. They must have, indeed, a quite fantastic hatred of Rome if they are reconciled to their own emptying conventicles by the reflection that on the relative percentages they improve a point or two per decade as against the adherents of the Pope. One fails to see how they would be worse off if the Catholic population were eight millions and theirs combined four millions. It might be supposed, then, that they would be scarcely less interested in the facts given above than Catholics, and would be as anxious as they to get at the root causes of the universal decline manifested in the gross totals, and to remove them. But to Catholics, at least, it should be apparent that there is something very paradoxically amiss if, while enjoying apparently more liberty and respect, they are perishing of a slow attrition, which has been constant for almost a century, and is still continuing. It would carry us too far afield to outline remedies. The first necessity is a recognition of the facts. When facts are recognized and causes ascertained the remedies will suggest themselves to any thoughtful mind. Policy will shape itself to suit the exigencies of the situation, which is grave enough to render the most sanguine serious, but need not drive even the most timid to despair. For there are elements of hope as well as reasons for misgiving. A great awakening has taken place, new horizons are opening up, fresh springs of energy have been tapped; and it only remains to guide them into the proper channels in order to make good the failures of the past.

## Support the Catholic Press

*From Bishop Cowgill's Pastoral.*

**N**EITHER the Faithful nor the clergy make use of the press as they should," said our late Holy Father, Pius X. "Its importance is not yet understood. In vain will you build churches, give missions, found schools—all your works, all your efforts will be destroyed if you are not able to wield the offensive and defensive weapon of a loyal and sincere Catholic press."

"A Catholic paper is a continual mission in every house," said Pope Leo XIII. We know the necessity, the power, the benefit of a mission, and the Pope tells us a Catholic paper may be compared to a continual mission in every house! And that great English Bishop, whose devotion and learning, and judgment, and experience fitted him to speak with the greatest authority—Bishop Hedley—said: "Priests and laity cannot do more for souls than to encourage by every means in their power good and cheap Catholic literature."

Surely no thinking man can deny the power of the press. A cause, or an idea, or a movement may, indeed, live on without help from the press, or even in spite of the press, but certainly its progress and fortunes can be tremendously helped or hindered by the press. And so a strong and loyal Catholic press is needed to defend the Church. Some Catholics seem to think that the defense of the Church is no concern of theirs. They fulfil all justice if they lead decent lives, go to Mass on Sundays, and put something in the plate. This, of course, is a false view of a Catholic's position and duties. Catholics are members of a society, the Church. They may not disregard and neglect the interests of that society. If able they are called upon to defend and promote those interests. And, therefore, since a strong Catholic press is needed for the defense of the Church, and a strong Catholic press cannot exist without Catholic support, we see at once the duty of Catholics to support a Catholic press.